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THE CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR MOVEMENT.

BY HENRY B. F. MACFARLAND, PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

A TINY seed, a great tree: from one society of less than fifty members to over sixty-six thousand societies and nearly four million members: from one small church in Portland, Maine, to churches in every Christian community and at most of the missionary stations the world round: from a few dollars a year, for missionary and other causes, to over half a million dollars last year from less than one-sixth of the whole number of societies: from obscurity to world-wide fame and influence—this is the quarter-of-a-century story of the Christian Endeavor movement. In much less than a generation it has reached this great growth. Its founder is still a comparatively young man. A modest gentleman, whose modesty and gentleness have concealed from many his exceptional ability and energy, with the sanity, the sentiment and the strength of the Puritan, he has been, so far as men are concerned, the head and front of it all. He has had the great good fortune,—almost unique,—to start a perfectly new organization, and then to lead it, through every increase and improvement and development, always keeping it to his thought for it. Sir George Williams, who had a somewhat similar experience, did not, in twice the time, impress his life as completely upon the Young Men's Christian Association movement; and even General William Booth, with autocratic authority, is not more intimately related to the Salvation Army than Dr. Francis E. Clark is to the Christian Endeavor societies, over which he has no authority, every one of them being absolutely independent, except of its own church.

The organizations which grew from the minds of these three men are, with those which are the practical outgrowths of them,

the most important of modern times. They are so unlike, except in the essential spirit, that they are not comparable. But, taken together, as having the same motive, inspiration and aspiration, they suggest that this should be called the Age of Faith, rather than the Age of Doubt. They are certainly worthy of more attention than they have received from the most intellectual observers, especially among editors and essayists. Men of letters are seldom in sympathy with evangelical Christianity, probably because they know too little about it. Simply as one of the facts of life in our day, the rise and progress of the Christian Endeavor movement, for example, is sufficiently important to be worthy the careful consideration of any thoughtful man, regardless of his views of religion. If a new political party had, in the same time, grown to such proportions and was showing the same virility and stability, it would be the frequent theme of men who, perhaps, do not know even the name of the Christian Endeavor Society. If four million people were keeping a pledge to read daily the plays of Shakespeare, or the poems of Dante, or the dialogues of Plato—to meditate upon them, to bring them to the attention of others and to put their highest teachings into practical living—that fact would interest immensely men who do not seem to know that the greatest book of all is having just such place and power in the lives of four million people. The Kingdom of Heaven cometh in all of its phases without observation, however, and it is not necessary, if desirable, that this particular phase of it should have that kind of observation. The vast majority of the members of the Christian Endeavor Society are happily unconscious of the fact that they are not under the eyes of certain critics, who, because they do not know that this and similar forms of religious life are giving Christianity new progress and power, write of it as if it were declining.

No philosopher who sees life whole, as it is to-day, can ignore the immense significance of such an organization as the Christian Endeavor Society. Not to speak of its importance to the individual church, or to the individual state, its value as an interdenominational and an international league, binding the churches together, and binding the states together, with the invisible ties of affection, sympathy, and a good purpose, can hardly be overestimated. Standing always for loyalty to the church denomination, and taking no partisan stand in politics, national or inter-

national, it has been one of the most efficient forces in bringing about that better understanding between churches and that better understanding between countries which are among the most prominent signs at the opening of the twentieth century. The cause of international peace through international justice, for instance, has already profited in a most practical way by the Christian Endeavor Society's active support of international arbitration and conciliation as means of settling international differences. For its members in every country are in constant communication with each other, through their organs and other channels. Patriotism, expressed in good citizenship, is a cardinal teaching among them, and hand in hand with it goes the doctrine that all men are brothers and that all nations should be friends, under the government of the principles of Jesus Christ. No wonder that it has had the official recognition and commendation of Presidents and Premiers, who have seen that it was of practical importance sufficient to entitle it to their particular notice. Sagacious statesmen see more quickly than men of letters, or even theologians, the meaning and effect of such things. They know that in the actual life of peoples they are more real and effective than political parties or governmental machinery, to say nothing of the power of literature or philosophy.

Yet nothing was further from the mind of the young Congregational minister of the Williston Church of Portland, Maine, when, on the evening of the 2nd of February, 1881, he organized his young parishioners into the first Christian Endeavor society, than that it would figure in the affairs of the nation, much less in the affairs of nations. Like Sir George William and General William Booth, he had no ambitious dreams and did not plan on paper a national or international organization, but, in the ordinary course of his pastoral duties, and to meet a need which stared him in the face, he began his work, unconscious of its future development and possibilities. Like Sir George Williams and General William Booth, he believed that his seed-thought was from God, and therefore had life, with all its possibilities, but he could not foresee its growth. He had the "faith in God, faith in man, faith in work"—the New England creed which Lowell pronounced "ample enough for this life and the next." He saw that he needed a better organization for the young people of his church, many of whom had recently been brought

into active membership in special meetings, than the old-fashioned types of young people's societies, and particularly that there must be a larger opportunity for them in the life and work of the church, and also an acknowledgment and obligation on their part to make the most of it. Accordingly, he prepared—having none to copy,—a constitution (“whose germs had lain in his mind for a long while”), for a society of Christian Endeavor, under an iron-clad obligation, which he read to the young Christians whom he had asked to his house on that winter Wednesday evening. In describing afterward what took place, he wrote that, after reminding them of their principles and duties, he read it to them, page by page, and then, he says, “a deathly stillness fell upon the meeting. These provisions were evidently more than the young people had bargained for. They had not been accustomed to take their religious duties so seriously . . . it seemed as though the society would die still-born. . . . But God ordered it otherwise. In that company were two who were especially influential and helpful. These were W. H. Pennell and the pastor's wife. Seeing that the matter was likely to fall through—at least for that meeting—Mr. Pennell affixed his signature to the constitution, and called upon his class of young men to do the same. Mrs. Clark quietly circulated among the girls, persuading them that it was not such a dreadful promise to make as they had at first supposed, telling them that the provisions of this constitution any earnest young Christian could live up to, and promising herself to be a member, although at first she shrank from the pledge as much as any of them.

“One by one the young men and women affixed their names to the document; a few minutes were spent in conversation, a closing prayer was offered and a hymn sung, and the young people went out into the frosty night and into their homes with many a merry ‘Good-night’ to each other, and the first society of Christian Endeavor was formed.”

The constitution, which has now been copied in principle by over sixty-six thousand societies, gave, as the object of the society, “to promote an earnest Christian life among its members, to increase their mutual acquaintance and to make them more useful servants of God.” But the most important clause—the stumbling-block to the young people and the potent cause of their after-success—related to the prayer-meeting, and stated: “It is

expected that all of the active members of this society will be present at every meeting unless detained by some absolute necessity, and that each one will take some part, however slight, in every meeting." This contained Dr. Clark's root idea, "that the young Christian must be trained into strong Christian manhood, as by the industrial training-school, which teaches apprentices how to work by working, how to use tools by using them, how to exercise hand and foot and eye and brain in order that hand and foot and eye and brain may become expert in life's vocation."

Besides this, there was provision for a monthly meeting of rededication and also for the officers and committees.

Under the flexible plan of the wise founder, the constitution has grown so as to provide for additional committees, and for the special circumstances of particular societies; but the basic principle in all the forms is that the active members shall both attend and take part in meetings and shall as faithfully carry on various kinds of work, always in and through the parent church and the leadership of its pastor. The pledge provides for personal, systematic and united endeavors. It always provides for daily Bible-reading, regular church attendance and participation in meetings, unless an excuse can be given conscientiously "to his Lord and Master," and the pledge has proved fascinating rather than repellent, and spiritual rather than mechanical. It is all as might have been expected from the ardent and mighty spirit of youth. American ingenuity has been shown in the progressive application of Christian Endeavor principles so as to take in people of all ages, and associate as well as active members, made up of those who, while not church members, are willing to attend the meetings; and in the division of work, so as to give everybody something definite to do, which is arranged among committees to cover every variety of possible endeavor in and out of the church. Its adaptation to all races, as well as churches and ages, is one of the proofs, to those who founded it, of its divine origin. A great company of witnesses in all lands testify to this.

Speaking of the church side of its work, Amos R. Wells says:

"There is the lookout committee, which spurs the careless, reclaims those who fall back or fail, and seeks and instructs new members; a conserving, an evangelizing, a missionary committee. There is the prayer-meeting committee, which selects leaders, plans new features for the meetings, and assists the leader in making the meeting a success. There

is the social committee, whose ingenuity in devising ways of reaching the young outside of the church, through social gatherings and pure amusements, has certainly been marvellous. The good-literature committee gathers subscriptions to denominational periodicals; collects for hospitals and missionaries the waste reading-matter of the congregation; opens church reading-rooms, literature tables, or book and magazine exchanges; supplies with religious reading barber shops, railroad waiting-rooms, and the like; keeps scrap-books bearing on the work of the different committees; edits and publishes the church paper, and often prints for circulation the pastor's sermons. The flower committee decorates the pulpit, and afterwards, with loving messages, distributes the flowers among the sick or poor. The calling committee seeks out strangers. The relief committee dispenses charitable gifts. The Sunday-school committee prepares itself to fill gaps in the ranks of the teachers, hunts up absent scholars, gathers in new ones. Missionary and temperance committees agitate those causes by special meetings and by literature. The usher committee welcomes visitors, and keeps the back seats clear. There are invitation committees, to distribute printed invitations to church meetings; correspondence committees to watch over members as they pass from one place to another, and introduce them into some new society and church home. There are pastors' aid committees, to do little odd jobs for the pastor. The ingenious young folks sometimes even form baby committees, to tend small children while their mothers go to church. By the time an Endeavorer has served a term on each of these committees in a live society he will have gained a pretty extensive training in applied Christianity.

"Christian Endeavorers are always prompt to put the seal of system on good ideas, as in the 'front-seat brigades,' the 'hand-shaking circles,' even the 'band of first getters-up!' They are ready to engage in a church census, or in out-district work. Similar committees from different societies often hold committee conferences, or correspond for an exchange of ideas; and, in the conventions, no part of the crowded programme, except, possibly, the question box, is so eagerly enjoyed as that unique Endeavor feature, the 'Open Parliament' for the discussion of methods of work."

The present-day condition among the Endeavor societies is full of promise. There is a growing number of societies, with forms and features differing from model suggestions. There are societies with two or three pledges. There are some that are practically a federation of different groups of young workers in the church. There are some which conduct various boys' and girls' clubs as feeders. Good citizenship and philanthropy are emphasized.

No one has done more to stimulate this tendency than the young General Secretary, Mr. Von Ogden Vogt, in conferences

in all parts of the country. He believes that all the young people of a church ought to be given some work to do to express their religion practically. But in many large parishes all the young people cannot be won to the same mode of expression. This is where a group form of society is valuable.

Some churches that have had several organizations for the youth are unifying them into one common Endeavor society. This dignifies the spiritual phases of the work in the minds of those interested in the practical only. It also minimizes machinery, enables church authorities to control more fully all the work for the young and makes for a better democracy among the youth of a church.

Mr. Vogt points to the growing intelligence in Sunday-school work, and declares that a like careful guidance will soon come to be given to the other things that need to be done for the boy besides teaching him.

The idea was taken from the Williston Church first by a Congregational church in Newburyport, Massachusetts. Four years ago, its pastor, Charles Perry Mills, wrote to Dr. Clark:

"If it is any comfort to you to know how the earliest pastor to imitate your example feels about Christian Endeavor after twenty years, let me say in deepest sincerity, 'I believe in it with my feet and my hands, with my eyes and my ears, with my tongue and my nostrils, for it tastes and smells sweet; I believe in it with my head and my heart; I believe in it north, south, east, west, and in every point of the compass between the four cardinal points, for it is to-day, on its merits and by the favor of God, world-wide.'"

This enthusiastic utterance is quite characteristic of the tributes given on all occasions and in all countries by its oldest as well as its newest friends. Many societies have doubtless dropped out, but very few of the leaders have left it during the years, while it has steadily grown in numbers and achievement.

As the news of the new organization was spread by the press, it was gradually introduced in many churches; but there were only six societies when the first convention was held at Williston Church, in June, 1882. There were fifty-three, with an enrolled membership of 2,630, when the second convention was held the next year. Before ten years passed, 5,000 delegates were present in a national convention held in Chicago, representing thirty-

three States and Territories, societies had been started in England, and Dr. Clark had been induced to retire from the pastorate to become the President of the United Society of Christian Endeavor, and Editor-in-Chief of "The Golden Rule," the Christian Endeavor organ, now named "The Christian Endeavor World." By the time the national convention met in Philadelphia in July, 1899, 6,500 delegates were sent, a number of foreign countries were represented, and the President of the United States sent a telegram of greeting. Prominent clergymen and other public speakers were glad to address this convention. These conventions have become an important feature in the life of the movement. Not even the political conventions have commanded such an attendance or shown such earnestness of enthusiasm, and no religious gatherings are comparable with them in numbers or public interest. Twenty thousand delegates from outside of the convention city, and an attendance of over fifty thousand, are the astonishing reports of these national conventions. They have been supplemented by State and local conventions. In all of these gatherings, every effort has been made to deepen the spiritual life and to instruct and inspire the societies through their representatives. Although many famous men and women have addressed these conventions, no one has had such an influence in them as the founder himself. Through his writings and through his public addresses, in this country and in his world tours in behalf of the Christian Endeavor movement, he has gained a personal hold upon the members of the societies which is unequalled by that of any other man in any other organization, and this is because he has drawn out the admiration and the affection of his followers. Those who know him best admire and love him most:

"With living breath of all the winds, his name
Is blown about the world; but, to his friends,
A sweeter secret hides behind his fame,
And love steals shyly through the loud acclaim
To murmur a 'God bless you!' and there ends."

Dr. Clark has so put his life into the Christian Endeavor movement that it seems like his body. It is impossible to write its history without seeming to write his biography. He is its typical man and represents its ideals as completely as any man can. It is

entitled to be judged by him and those who are most like him. All Christian Endeavorers are not like him, although the proportion of those who fail entirely and publicly is not large. The churches will testify, and, more important, the cities—and especially those in which Christian Endeavor conventions have been held—will testify that the impression made by the great majority of Christian Endeavorers is a favorable one, and no one sees more quickly the mistakes of any of the societies or individuals than does its leader, or has been more quick to adopt suggestions or proposed amendments or improvements. Open-mindedness and teachableness are characteristic of the Christian Endeavor leaders, as of the Christian Endeavor societies. The fears of those who apprehended that pharisaism, spiritual pride and formalism would soon appear in the new organization proved as unfounded as the fears that the young people would be made bold and disagreeable by it. No men have been more grateful or more loyal to the Christian Endeavor movement than the pastors of the churches; and even those denominations which have preferred to have denominational societies of their young people have carried on the Christian Endeavor work by adopting its principles. Well may the churches show gratitude! Dr. Clark has stated that, “on the average for ten years past, nearly two hundred thousand each year of the associate members of the society have connected themselves with some branch of the church of God.” Although he does not claim that this is due wholly to the society, no one can doubt that it is largely due to the society. He has also stated that: “It is far below the actual facts to say that the Endeavorers annually give, through their own organizations, in addition to all that they give through other channels of the church, not less than a million dollars a year for the home churches and for missions at home and abroad,” and he justly claims that very much of this is an extra asset, additional to what would have been given otherwise, as shown by what was given before the Christian Endeavor movement began.

It cannot be too often repeated that the United Society, which is the international headquarters, does not draw for its support one dollar from the individual societies, but is maintained by the profits of its own publications. Dr. Clark has supported himself by his own writings. Ten thousand dollars a year is gathered from the societies in America and Great Britain, solely to pro-

mote the cause of Christian Endeavor in countries where the English language is not spoken, on the invitation of the church missionaries.

Dr. Clark's character, as well as his consistent purpose, is well shown in the four great objects which he set before the societies at the convention of 1905, in Baltimore, namely:

1. That they give \$1,000,000 to denominational missions;
2. That they should bring into the church one million new church attendants;
3. That they should induce one million persons to join the church;
4. That they should bring one million new members into the Christian Endeavor societies.

It is most natural that the other leaders of the movement, without Dr. Clark's knowledge, planned to set up a memorial of his work which should also serve to perpetuate it, in celebration of its first quarter of a century of life, in the form of a building for the international headquarters of the national society, and a fund for its maintenance to be provided by the gifts of the Christian Endeavorers of the world. The proposition that each Endeavorer should give a small sum—twenty-five cents, if no more—has been received, as might have been expected, with enthusiasm all over this country and Canada, and in all foreign countries where the Christian Endeavor flag flies. An international committee for the promotion of the Christian Endeavor quarter-century memorial fund has been formed, with representatives of all churches and countries, and a strong finance committee which promises success for the undertaking.

Sir George Williams was knighted by Queen Victoria for founding the Young Men's Christian Association, celebrated its jubilee in Westminster Abbey, and was made a freeman of the City of London, and similar honors might have been given Dr. Clark if he had done his work from London. Not only the Endeavorers, with their personal devotion to him, but all of those who can appreciate the value of his services to society and its increasing influence upon the future, will feel that to give Dr. Clark the honor that is proposed for him, and which he will appreciate chiefly because it will be of lasting benefit to his life-work, is not too great for this benefactor of mankind.

HENRY B. F. MACFARLAND.